

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: APRIL 22, 2005

Dept. of Consumer Affairs Highlights Clean Air Program on Earth Day

Director Charlene Zettel Reminds Motorists of Vehicle Retirement Option for High Polluters

SACRAMENTO - Californians observing Earth Day today can begin to "breathe easier" thanks to a Department of Consumer Affairs, Bureau of Automotive Repair program that offers financial assistance to motorists whose high-polluting vehicles fail a biennial Smog Check.

In March, Governor Schwarzenegger launched the *Breathe Easier* public awareness campaign to promote the clean-air benefits of vehicle retirement and repair assistance for high polluting vehicles. Consumer Affairs Director Charlene Zettel today reminded consumers about the program.



"Earth Day is a great occasion for reminding Californians that there are some options for them if their vehicle fails Smog Check," said Zettel. "Our Consumer Assistance Program can help them contribute to better air quality by cleaning up their high-polluting cars or taking them off the road permanently."

The *Breathe Easier* campaign includes public service announcements and advertisements about the harmful effects of air pollution and information regarding the Bureau of Automotive Repair's Consumer Assistance Program (CAP).

If they meet eligibility requirements for CAP, vehicle owners can receive up to \$500 in assistance for smog-related repairs, or \$1,000 to retire their high-polluting vehicle and send it to the crusher.

The program targets the vehicles that are the worst polluters. Although these vehicles make up only about ten percent of all the vehicles on the road, they put out about half of the vehicle pollution.

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“Studies show that air pollution contributes to respiratory problems for Californians, particularly children,” said Zettel. “Asthma is the most pervasive chronic disease among California children, resulting in expensive hospitalizations and missed school days.”

The goal for CAP is to take 15,000 high polluting vehicles off of California roadways by the end of the 2005-06 fiscal year. This represents more than 900 tons of reduction in smog-forming pollutants.

The money for the CAP comes from a portion of a \$12 annual fee paid by new vehicle owners, who are exempt from Smog Check for the first six years.

An application for the CAP program can be obtained from any state licensed Smog Check facility, online at www.smogcheck.ca.gov, or by calling 1-800-952-5210. The application provides full details on program eligibility requirements. Motorists who intend to apply for the Consumer Assistance Program should not have any repairs performed on their vehicle.

To qualify for up to \$500 in repair assistance, the owner of a car that fails its Smog Check must meet income-eligibility requirements or have been directed to a Test Only station. To qualify for \$1,000 vehicle retirement, a vehicle that fails its Smog Check must have been continuously registered for 24 months, pass an inspection at a participating auto dismantling site, and meet certain other eligibility requirements. The owner will receive a check from the dismantling facility that retires the vehicle.

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